THE TEXT OF THE SPEACH DELIVERED IN A PRESS CONFERENCE AT NATIONAL PRESS CLUB, DACCA ON 25TH APRIL, 1980 BY THE MEMBERS OF THE FACT-FINDING TEAM FOR THE KALAMPATI MASSACRE IN CHITTAGONG HILL TRACTS.

GENTLEMEN FROM THE PRESS,

Please have our congratulation. You are invited here to listen to our experience that we had during our visit to Ctg. Hill Tracts on 22nd and 23rd April, 1980 in a delegation of the opposition members of the Parliament. We sincerely hope that for the great interest of the nation, you will help us to communicate our views to the people giving due importance to it.

You know that an uneasy situation is prevailing in Ctg. Hill Tracts for the last few years. Government has kept the people in total darkness in this regard. Inspite of it, the news that we get from different sources is enough to make any conscious citizen anxious about the whole affairs. We have been drawing the attention of the Government in this regard from the first Session of the Parliament. But it has always been kept a side tactfully. Government did not issue any clear-cut statement. On the other hand attempts were made to misguide the people and the public opinion by circulating motivated news about the incidents in Ctg. Hill Tracts. But after the ghastly and inhuman killings in the Kalampati Union under Betbunia Police Station of tne district which have been perpetrated on 25th March, 1980, there is no scope for any human being with conscious to ramain silent. A few days before the incident of Kalampati, people came to know about the death of Major Mohsin Raja and some other army personnels in an encounter in Ctg. Hill Tracts. This question was raised in the Parliament, but the Government abstained from answering it. During this period the sensational shoot-out took place on 25th March. After investigating the whole incident, Mr. Upendra Lal Chakma, a member

of the Parliament from the area, disclosed the whole thing in a Press Conference on 1st April, 1980 and has drwan the attention of the Government to it But mysteriously people were not informed until now by the Government, neither about that incident nor about the total situation prevailing in Ctg, Hill Tracts. Though a Parliamentary Committee was formed to discuss and prepare a report on the law and order situation of Ctg. Hill Tracts, the local M. P. Mr. Upendra Lal Chakma was not included in it.

In view of the above, we deem it as our responsibility to let the people know about the real situation. We will raise the issue in the Parliament at the first opportunity. Because we think that the incidents have implications not only on the different nationalities of Ctg. Hill Tracts but the questions of law and order, development of the whole country and the peace and stability of the region are also closely connected with it. After visiting the area in a fact-finding team, we came to this firm conclusion that if the prevailing problems of Ctg. Hill Tracts are not solved right now it will jeopardise the interest of the whole of Bangladesh.

*In this fact-finding Mission to Ctg, Hill Tracts, we talked with a cross-section of people both tribals and settlers and consulted with the administration, police, tribal leaders and journalists. We are happy to note here that we got help and co-operation from the district and police administration and above all from the oppressed local people.

DEAR FRIENDS FROM THE PRESS,

After visiting the place of occurence, we found the evidence of the killings and atrocities committed by one unit of the Army at Kaukhali Bazar of Kalampati Union under Betbunia Police Station of Ctg. Hill Tracts on 25th March, 1980. The newly arrived refugees also took part in the act of killing and looting the tribal people. Even after one month of the incident, a reign of terror is prevailing in the entire area. Inspite of the all-out-efforts by the

local administrrtion and tribal leaders, the evicted poor tribal people do not dare come back to their destroyed and demolished villages. Because arrest harrasment, man-siaughtering, arson, looting and threats from the settlers still continue. On our way to the place of main occurance, about five hundred distressed tribals and Buddhist monks narrated the night-mare they had experienced. The name of the place was "CHELACHARA". The Sub-divisional Officer and all the journalists were present with us. Among the distressed people at CHELACHARA, we met a Buddhist Monk of the Headman para Kyang (Buddhist Temple) injuared during the ordeal, the wife of the murdered Bazar Choudhury of Kaukhali and a large number of women who lost their husbonds. We also met the persons injured by bullets and other sharp edged weapons. All of them were now staying far away from their health and home. We came to know that a few thousand up-rooted tribals were also staying at Burighat Bazar and some other places, As a result hundred of acres of paddy were now lying • abandowd, We were also told that many of the injured persons lifted by helicoptors supposed to be taken to the Hospital were still missing.

From Chelachara, we moved by car and on foot and visited Kaukhali, Mukh para, Headmanpara, Tong-para, Poapara and Kaukhali Bazar. Everywhere we found signs of destruction. The killers attacked the women who took shelter in the house of Mr. Aung Thow Prue Roazo, Union Council member of Kalampati Union. The time was 10 A. M.. Mrs Rui Mara Ching, a 27 years old woman, died on the spot. We have seen dried-up blood in the house. Another woman was also injured. About 30/32 women were forcibly taken by the army in their camp. The old and children were released in the evening. But Younger Women were kept for 3 to 4 days. On their way back, the old women and the children were assaulted by the settlers. But tee police came to their rescue and saved their lives. The house of the former Member of Parliament, Mr, Chai Thoai Roaza was also looted and demolished in the same way. The Kyang (Temple) of his house was aiso destroyed. He is the Headman of the area. His wife told us that more than 10 persons of her family were still missing.

Last of all we visited Kaukhali Bazar and Poapara Buddhist Temple area. It is alleged that the Commander of the local army camp instructed the local leaders to assemble in the market in the morning in the name of holding a meeting. At the same time, that Commander also informed the local people to come at that time for the re-constauction of the poapara Buddhist Temple. The local people reported that suddenly the Army personnel arrived at the market and started to kill the local leaders who had come to the meeting by firing. Bazar Choudhury Mr. Kumud Bikash Talukder and the Secretary of the Local School Committee Mr. Shashidev Chakma were among the victims. The son of Mr. Talukder who serves in a Bank at Rangamati alleged that his father was supposed to go to Rangamati for shopping that day and had Tk. 10,000/- with him. The money along with the dead body was not found. The age of the ill-fated Bazar Choudhury was 60 (Sixty) and he had been performing the same duty since British period.

Those who managed to survive the messacre told us that persons assaulted during the repair works of Buddhist Temple were killed by brush fire. Inspite of the attempt to erase it, we have seen marks of blood in the temple, We have also seen damaged doors and windows and the broken statues of "BUDDHA". A massgrave of the messacred tribals near tne temple moved us very much. One Guru Das Chakma has survived miraculously. Presumed to be dead he was left behind with the other dead bodies. He told us that about 50/60 persons were buried together in the grave. It may be mentioned here that local tribals weo helped us for visiting these places accompanied us from a few miles away from the spot. As soon as we returned, they also came back with us. For the sake of security, none of them is ready to stay there. At the same time we have seen the dwelling places of the settlers in good condition. These were built on the lands of tribals. The settlers were brought here from different districts with the promise of weekly ration and shelter. A local Magistrate told us that 2637 families were given the plots for housing and 300 families were given lands for cultivation. Each family is provided with 12 seers

of wheat per week. But when asked on what decision of the Government these settlers had come, the district administration expressed total ignorance in this regard. They told us that the influx of the settlers has been stopped. But in the meantime, already 20,000 refugees have infiltrated into the different areas of Chittagong Hill Tracts.

DEAR FRIEND FROM THE PRESS,

The noddest chapter of this painful incident is the attack on the "BUDDHIST TEMPLES". We have visited the damaged temples at Kachukhali, Mukhpara, Headmanpara, Tongpara, Ananda Mohan Buddhist Temple and Poapara Buddhist Monestry. The gold, silver and hrass statues of Buddha, furnitures, wallclock, money from the donation Box and other valuables from this Holy centres were all looted. We have further information about the damage done at others Buddhist Temples. Interference on religion has naturally excited the sentiments of the people of the entire region.

The demands which were specially put to us by the people of the affected area are :—

(a) Stoppage of illegal infiltration,

(b) Trial of the persons responsible for massacre,

(c) Stoppage of the dishonour of women,

(d) Protection of the religious institutions,

(e) Cremation of the deceased through religions rites,

(f) Establishment of the right to self-determination for the tribals,

(g) Eviction of the settlers from the land habitats of the tribals.

The inhabitants of Chittagong Hill Tracts compared the incident of Kaukhali Union to the genocide of '71'. We think there is no exaggeration in the comparison. In fact what we have seen in the area reminds us of the night-mare of 1971. It is obvious to us that the incident of Kalampati is not an isolated event. It has been perpetrated systematically and with definite plan, the plan which

is the out-come of some perverted mentality chose the date 25th March for another genocide. And in the name of providing food and shelter, poor, helpless and landless people from the different districts are being used against the oppressed and innocent people of Chittagong Hill Tracts. This is not only an ignoble and inhuman plan but also a conspiracy directed against the poor people of Ctg. Hill Tracts and other districts of Bangladesh. We can in no way allow the implementation of this secret designs. The sinister motive of the Govt. is clear from the fact that the district administration attempts to express ignorance about the influx of settlers but on the other hand, busy with rehabilitating the refugees on the hearth and home of the tribals. Reviewing the whole chain of events it appears to us that the Govt. has let loose a reign of terror in Hill Tracts with a definite aim of uprooting the tribals from their settlements so that their just movement for the right to self-determination may be foiled. The aim of the plan includes forcible distortion and destructoin of the religion, culture and traditions of the tribal people.

We came to know that in the name of maintaing law and order, members of the different law enforcing agencies have prohibited the transportation and storage of food upto a certain quantity in different areas. As a result, people living in the far-flung hilly regions either have to come to tne market daily or starve. "BHUJANCHARA" is an union under Borkal Thana (Police Station) We are told that BDRs of Borkal put restrictions on the movements of goods to the small weekly "HAT" of the union on which 13 Mouzas depend. From the first week of April, 1980, BDR personnels have totally stopped the supply of rice, salt, keresine, dried-fish and other necessary items of daily use. The local people are suffering from acute food shortage. The same is the case with many areas in Ctg. Hill Tracts.

Dishonour of women and the occupation of land are the subjects about which the tribal people are mostly concerned. They alleged that the disnonour of women was mostly done by the security

forces. The incident of Kalampati combined with the series of similar events give testimony to the malicious design of the Government aimed at the military solution of the existing problems regarding the right to self-determination of the nationalities of Ctg. Hill Tracts. It is quite natural that regarding these atrocities the district civil administration has nothing to do but to go for some relief works. *

* In fact there is dual administration in Ctg. Hill Tracts. There is no Emergency in the country and it is not proclaimed in Ctg Hill Tracts also Now the question is that on what ground or on the basis of what law the Government has deployed the Army in the area in fight an undeclared war.

We want to declare it categorically that we cannot support the oppression of the people of Hill Tracts and at the sume time we cannot allow our brothers in the Army to be used in an unlawful assignment and killed in the process.

DEAR FRIENDS,

On the basis of our discussion with different categories of people and with the different sections of the administration, we came to this firm conclusion that the existing problems are fully political by nature and it should be solved politically. The problem is the problem of establishing the rights of the oppressed nationalities of Ctg Hill Tracts. The problem begins with the Commissioning of "KAPTAI" Hydro-electric Project in Pakistan Period that uprooted thousands of tribals from their traditional hearth and home. After the establishment of Bangladesh, the special status of Ctg. Hill Tracts in the constitution has been withdrwan. Moreover. Prime Minister Sheikh Mujibur Rahman advised the tribals to become BANGALEE by abandoning their own culture and tradition. After the independence of Bangladesh, more than one lakh outsiders infiltrated into Ramgarh and Feni Valley under the aegis and assistance of the Government, The settlers killed

many tribals in order to evict them from their lands. In the name of punishing the miscreants, joint combing operation with the Indian Army was conducted. All these anti-People measures created a feeling of distrust and doubt among the tribals which found expression in the demand for the recognition of national entity and the establishment of the right to self-determination Our discussion with many distingui.hed persons of the area convinced us that they are demanding it within the Bangladeshi state frame-work keeping the basic character of the constitution unchanged. Except for a handful of collaborators and self-seekers the people of Ctg. Hill Tracts whole-heartedy support these demands. Even the Bengali aboriginals of the area justify the demands To try to find separtism, demands for independence, interference of the external forces in these demands is either foolishness or political shrewdness. The experience of our own struggle give testimony to it. So we must find out a political solution to the problem. The armed resistance movement in Ctg. Hill Tracts cannot be supported but it is a reality. By recognising this reality, Government has to come forward for a just political solution. We came to know that Government is eager for a political solution and with this aim in view, has taken some steps. But attempt for political solution cannot go side by side with brutal military operation.

Through this Press Conference, we call upon the Government to recognise the nationalities of Ctg. Hill Tracts and grant them Regional Autonomy within the frame-work of the constitution for the political settlement of the existing crisis. To acheive these objectives, we suggest two measures :

(a) Stoppage of military operation for the establishment of civil Administration in the true sense, and

(b) To start dialogue with the tribal leaders. At the same time. regarding the heinous tragedy at Kalampati Union of Kaukhali, we have the following suggestions :

(a) Judicial enquiry for the incident of Kalampati Union (Manslaughtering of 25th March) and punishment for murderers.

(b) Rehabilitation of the distressed with due security.

(c) Re-establishment of the damaged Buddhist religious Institutions with compensation and apology for hurting religious sentiments.

(d) Stoppage of infiltration from different districts.

(e) Immediate withdrawal of the settlers from Ctg. Hill Tracts.

(f) Withdrawal of registrictions on the movements of goods in the market places.

DEAR FRIENDS,

We believe that if these steps are taken for the solution of the problems of Ctg. Hill Tracts, the people of the area will be relieved and satisfied. Our liberation struggle taught us the lesson that we should not do anything which would put black spot on the liberation struggle. We beg apology on behalf of the entire nation, to the distressed brothers and sisters of different nationalities of Ctg. Hill Tracts for the incident of Kalampati. We want to declare it categorically that the people especially the Democratic forces of the 19 (nineteen) other districts of Bangladeseh are united with the movement of the people of Hill Tracts. At last, we appeal to the Democratic and Progressive Organisations, Intellectuals, Thinkers and others to become vocal demanding the just political settlement for the existing crisis in Ctg. Hill Tracts.

With thanks :

(1) SHAHJAHAN SIRAJ
Member of Parliament (M P)

(2) RASHED KHAN MENON -do-

(3) UPENDRA LAL CHAKAMA -do-

Dated : Dacca the
25th April, 1980.